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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation on its first session

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
from 18 to 22 January 1993

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation, established in accordance with paragraph 70 of the Cartagena Commitment (TD/364), held its first session at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 18 to 22 January 1993. In the course of the session, the Standing Committee held six plenary meetings. 1/

Opening statements

2. The Chairman said that the establishment of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation within UNCTAD had been one of the main priority tasks in the new partnership for development. Notwithstanding the work to be carried out by other Standing Committees and Working Groups, the issue of poverty represented one of the biggest challenges to the new UNCTAD and as such required specific results which would allow countries to achieve concrete progress in reducing poverty. The work of the Committee should answer two basic questions: what could be done within the framework of UNCTAD, and how should the Committee organize itself to achieve it?

3. He warned, however, against the risk of the debate drifting into generalities and theoretical issues, without any concrete results. The Committee should aim at reaching a work programme which would lead to an actual reduction of poverty.

4. Poverty varied from one country to another and between regions, and this implied adopting different means and strategies for addressing it. He also felt that it was important to set up and strengthen safety nets for the poor, both domestically and at the international level.

5. He deplored the stagnation and fall in the volume of international aid, which had adversely affected the poor. For financial assistance to be effective, donor countries should regard their commitments as obligations, and aid should be channelled on a predictable basis.

6. Although poverty was a problem which concerned everyone, it nevertheless remained the primary responsibility of each country. Clear and efficient national poverty reduction strategies could only enhance international cooperation.

7. With regard to international trade, protectionism remained a major obstacle in the fight against poverty, and a quick and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round negotiations would be a major step in that fight.

8. The recent initiative launching the World Summit on Social Development at the highest political level was an indication of the international commitment to the fight against poverty by the world community. He hoped that the work of the Standing Committee would be of great importance for the success of the World Summit.

1/ For the terms of reference of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation, see Trade and Development Board decision 398 (XXXVIII), annex, section B.

9. The recent decision taken at the thirty-ninth session of the Trade and Development Board on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on structural adjustment for the transition to disarmament would provide an opportunity for identifying strategies that could reap the fruits of the peace dividend.

10. With respect to the role of UNCTAD, the best strategy might be to strengthen the cooperation among member States. In this connection, he emphasized that the exchange of national experiences involving different policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty could be extremely effective in improving the scope and effectiveness of those programmes. For this approach to be effective, a mechanism whereby member countries could identify and select issues for the exchange of experience should be set up within the framework of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation. He also appealed to donor countries and institutions to contribute to the financial costs of the participation of policy-makers from developing countries so as to maximize the exchange of experience among those responsible for implementing anti-poverty policies in participating countries.

11. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that the task before the Committee was a difficult one. Despite several decades of development efforts, poverty had not been reduced in developing countries and had been on the rise in the developed countries, particularly in the economies in transition. There was a broad consensus that, unless efforts were coordinated and intensified at the national, regional and international levels, poverty would continue to increase. He recognized that progress had been made in a number of countries, for example in Asia, but poverty was nevertheless increasing at an alarming rate.

12. There was a certain consensus on the main elements of a successful strategy against poverty. It was not enough to have a redistribution of resources in favour of the poor. What was most needed was the integration of the poor into the mainstream of the development process. This presupposed the creation of job opportunities, as well as improving the working of markets and social and political institutions. As regards the poorest and most vulnerable groups, safety nets and targeted assistance would be required.

13. The implementation of an efficient strategy would require difficult political choices, not only because of the need for changes in social and administrative practices, but also because of the need for a favourable environment, which depended on broad international cooperation.

14. The universal membership of the Standing Committee, and the fact that it was devoted exclusively to the prevention, alleviation and elimination of poverty, made it a unique forum within the United Nations system. The Standing Committee should be a forum where countries, national institutions and NGOs debated national experiences on poverty issues. This debate would contribute to a better understanding of the causes and persistence of poverty. It would contribute also to the emergence of consensus on the strategies and policies to be followed and in the formulation of projects and programmes that could be adopted by certain countries. The Standing Committee should also examine how international cooperation could contribute to the success of policies for the alleviation of poverty. He felt that in this way the

Committee would contribute to the efforts of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in defining a global strategy in the fight against poverty and in coordinating actions within the United Nations system.

15. With regard to the work programme of the Standing Committee, the terms of reference established by the Trade and Development Board were extremely broad. It would be useful for Governments to agree on the issues which they wished to examine in the coming three and a half years, and the order in which they wish to examine them. The areas of work of the Committee could be grouped into two main themes, each requiring different methods of work. The first would focus on the exchange of experiences, and the second on issues with an international component, namely: aid and poverty; international trade and poverty; and migration and poverty.

16. Concerning the exchange of national experiences, an efficient mechanism should be established for the collection of reliable information and for its analysis and dissemination. One approach to the exchange of national experience would be to group countries according to areas of interest. Another approach would be to organize expert group meetings involving different organizations and institutes on specific countries and questions. Yet a third approach would be to organize seminars and workshops with interested government representatives, international organizations and community representatives on selected issues.

17. The Cartagena Commitment called upon NGOs to participate in the work of the Committee, and he expressed the hope that the relevant NGOs would so participate and that interested NGOs which had not yet done so would seek consultative status with UNCTAD.

18. As regards resources for the work of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation, the UNCTAD secretariat would devote the required resources to work in areas where it had expertise and would call upon the specialized agencies for collaboration and assistance in their respective areas of competence, so as to make efficient use of scarce resources and avoid duplication of work. In this connection, consultations had already taken place with other agencies of the United Nations system, and an informal inter-agency meeting had been convened by UNCTAD on the eve of the session of the Standing Committee. He also stressed the importance of country contributions in presenting national experiences.

Chapter I

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

(Agenda item 3)

19. For its consideration of this item, the Standing Committee had before it the following documentation:

"Issues note by the UNCTAD secretariat" (TD/B/CN.2/2);

"Background note by the UNCTAD secretariat" (TD/B/CN.2/3).

20. The spokesman for the least developed countries (Bangladesh) said that the LDCs welcomed the establishment of the new Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation, which would impart new direction and momentum to the task of developing a greater awareness of the problems of poverty and its solutions. UNCTAD could make a substantial contribution to supporting the poverty alleviation programmes which were being implemented in different parts of the world. However, a debate on definitions, measurement and other technical questions should be avoided. What was required was large investments designed to tackle the problems of widespread poverty. In addition, adequate market access was needed for the products of the developing countries.

21. International aid had not been allocated on the basis of poverty level, and although document TD/B/CN.2/2 raised that problem, it recommended no policy actions to be followed by donor countries.

22. The servicing of external debt continued to impose a heavy burden on indebted countries, and the cancellation of all official debt and the implementation of relief measures for other types of debt could release resources for investment in poverty alleviation projects in the least developed countries. Dependence on market forces alone would not be enough for alleviation of poverty. Government intervention and the provision of safety nets for the most vulnerable groups would still be required.

23. Poverty in high per capita income countries could not be compared with poverty in the poorest least developed countries. Although the primary responsibility for eradicating poverty in the LDCs lay with the national Governments of those countries, the role of the international community was essential for a meaningful partnership in an interdependent world. Aid funds might be earmarked for poverty alleviation projects.

24. With regard to the role of NGOs, they should coordinate their activities with national Governments and avoid conflicting approaches. NGOs should not compete for bilateral funds from donor countries but should generate their own funding.

25. Referring to the situation in Bangladesh, he said that the ongoing national five-year plan was aimed at alleviating poverty and creating productive employment through the development of human resources. In this connection, a number of innovative strategies were to be used to increase the participation of the poor, decentralize decision-making, increase the

participation of women in the development process and increase access of the poor to credit facilities. Priority was being given to primary education. The Grameen Bank was also engaged in a poverty alleviation programme whereby it provided credit to assetless borrowers without any collateral.

26. The representative of Israel said that his country was among those which had strongly supported the inclusion of poverty alleviation as a major topic for action within UNCTAD at the eighth session of UNCTAD in Cartagena. Poverty could be dealt with through self-help combined with untied external aid, as had been shown by his country, which had succeeded in fighting poverty and giving dignity to its citizens. The experience of his country, both at home and abroad, provided important lessons which could benefit other countries.

27. The social welfare and safety nets introduced in Israel had been very effective in protecting the most vulnerable groups, particularly immigrant groups. Although, in a situation of crisis, it was essential to rely on outside assistance, in the longer term prevention and reduction of poverty required self-reliance based on increased local production and the establishment of a well-functioning agricultural sector.

28. In order to break out of the poverty and over-population circle, it was essential to give women a bigger role in the production process, allied with greater access to education, health services, family planning and job opportunities.

29. Israel stressed a regional integrated planning approach in the context of poverty alleviation, with prioritization of projects on the basis of needs as a guiding principle in the selection of activities. In that connection, the "training of trainers" was an essential tool in broadening the participation of local communities, as well as the decentralization of decision-making processes.

30. Israel was willing to share its experience with all countries and had made available a paper prepared especially for the meeting by the Mount Carmel Training Centre.

31. The representative of the United States of America said that, in its work, the Standing Committee would be considering one of the most serious problems facing mankind. Although progress had been made in reducing the incidence of poverty, the absolute number of poor people might continue to increase, largely due to population growth.

32. The main task of the Committee should be to contribute to a better understanding of effective strategies for reducing poverty. To this end, the Committee would need to identify the elements it wished to examine and the insights it could bring to ongoing poverty alleviation efforts. In this connection, she referred to the work carried out by the United Nations agencies and other international organizations, including UNDP, IFAD and IBRD.

33. In view of the diversity of the countries members of the Standing Committee, it would be more effective to examine strategies that aimed at reducing mass poverty in the poorest countries by drawing on the experiences of others, as opposed to looking at pockets of poverty in more advanced economies.

34. Poverty reduction required a two-track approach: sustainable economic growth combined with investment in people. The right pattern of growth must also be achieved so that the poor benefited from efficient labour-intensive growth. Investment in people addressed both the causes and the symptoms of poverty, because frequent illness, malnutrition, illiteracy and gender bias were among its worst manifestations. Among the key issues to be examined were the provision of credit to the poor and the effective participation of women.

35. She also emphasized that the exchange of successful experiences could help other countries to make substantial progress in their endeavour to fight poverty. In this connection, she reiterated that this exercise must not be an academic one, but should be guided by the objective of helping Governments in their policy-planning processes, so as to maximize the use of development funds in combination with national budget resources.

36. The representative of Brazil said that the philosophy which guided his Government's policies in the fight against poverty was closely in line with the move towards a market economy, democracy and a new social policy. The new social policy was viewed by his Government as an effective way of reinstating the legitimate rights of citizens. Social policy was thus judged on its own merits, as well as a means to achieve increased competitiveness through increased access to health and education.

37. Over a number of years, external shocks, debt-servicing obligations and the fight against inflation had led the central Government to reduce expenditures on education, health, infrastructure and safety nets. As a consequence of the sharp fall in external finance and the increase in international interest rates, the country had become a net transferor of resources abroad, reducing the availability of funds that should be used in health, education and social welfare programmes.

38. The new national development strategy was being designed with the aim of fighting poverty. Governmental action would be decentralized and would focus on increased participation of the private sector, local communities and NGOs. Increased efficiency of State institutions would be sought. The President of the Republic had shown clear political will in mobilizing all governmental sectors with the objective of ensuring increased access of the poorest to products and services indispensable for the exercise of citizenship, in both urban and rural areas. To this effect, emphasis would be placed on structural action, reducing assistance-type measures to essential emergency situations and banishing all forms of electoral manipulation of social policy.

39. The representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, said that the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation offered an opportunity for a serious analysis of several questions, namely who were the world's poor, where was the most acute poverty, what policies, programmes and actions had succeeded or failed and what lessons could be drawn. Experience had shown that a high rate of economic growth did

not lead to quick and automatic reduction of poverty. New and more comprehensive policy approaches for poverty alleviation must therefore be developed at the national and international levels to try to ensure that economic growth would lead to balanced and equitable development, which was the first condition for alleviating poverty. Furthermore, these new approaches must be developed on the basis of democracy and democratic institutions in order to ensure the necessary social justice. Participation of the poor in the decision-making process was vital, as was the development of the human resources of the poor and access to social services in respect of health, housing, education, etc., as well as to basic productive necessities. Growth strategies needed to enhance the productive potential of the poor and must include giving the poor access to resources like land and credit facilities. Poverty had a strong gender bias in both developing and developed countries, with statistics showing that 70 per cent of the world's poorest were women. However, women were often excluded from initiatives in the productive sectors.

40. The European Community hoped that the Committee could examine and compare national experiences in respect of cuts in excessive military spending, including the reorientation and allocation of resources.

41. He recalled the emphasis given to poverty alleviation in the Cartagena Commitment and welcomed the establishment of a Division on Development Strategies in the UNCTAD secretariat, which included in its tasks the issue of poverty alleviation. The Committee should focus its attention on just a few subjects in areas where it was likely that operational conclusions could be reached. It was important to avoid duplicating the work of other international bodies. In selecting issues to be tackled, an intersectoral approach to poverty and an emphasis on people-centred and equitable development should be maintained. With regard to the exchange of national experiences, possible topics could include policies on macroeconomic adjustment, internal pricing, and the productive and social sectors as they related to the poverty issue, as well as human resource development, good government, popular participation and the role of non-governmental organizations. The interrelationship between trade and poverty seemed to fall naturally into the work of UNCTAD, and the environmental dimension of poverty alleviation should also be taken up by the Committee. As for urban migration and other demographic factors, UNCTAD should draw on the work and experiences of other international organizations.

42. The European Community and its member States had actively pursued poverty-alleviation-oriented policies within the Community and in its relations with developing countries and countries in transition. They were paying increasing attention to ensuring that aid was used in support of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty. In that connection, at UNCED the developed countries had reaffirmed their commitment to reaching the accepted target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA.

43. The spokesman for the Asian Group (Nepal) said that poverty alleviation was of crucial importance to the developing countries, in particular Asia, which had the largest concentration of poor people. The persistence of acute poverty in some developing countries was unacceptable and for that reason he fully agreed with the principle of the Cartagena Commitment and Agenda 21 requiring effective international cooperation for the eradication of poverty.

The poor should have access to resources, and policies and institutional frameworks should be designed to enable them to utilize these resources effectively. Giving the poor an opportunity to play an active role in their own development and providing technical assistance was very much a part of the solution to poverty.

44. Although poverty alleviation programmes and projects were the concern of domestic policies, international support actions were of great importance. The primary goal of the work programme of the Standing Committee should be the analysis of the role, effectiveness and overall impact of international action in support of developing countries in combating poverty and the recommendation of mechanisms aimed at optimizing the role of such international action. Particular attention should be given to the diversity of country situations, and the Committee should give full consideration to the most vulnerable group of countries, namely the LDCs. The Committee should also study the causes and effects of processes such as the current slow-down in the world commodity market and decreasing commodity prices, both of which contributed to perpetuating poverty.

45. The Asian Group would welcome the convening of a donor/recipient expert meeting on the impact of development assistance and cooperation programmes, as suggested by the secretariat in its documentation. Such a meeting would be more beneficial if it covered areas such as the effect of the economic policies of donors and recipients, structural adjustment programmes and the impact of trade expansion on poverty alleviation. An assessment of the activities of NGOs which had been successful in reaching and working with the most needy populations would also be useful.

46. There were many success stories in practically every Asian country where the poorest of the poor had been organized in order to contribute to human development, growth and equity as complementary outcomes of a single process. Where the poor were empowered and made subject to their own development, they were a huge resource and a part of the solution. It was desirable that regional and subregional groups appoint independent commissions to study the problems of poverty and recommend the strategic options for action. In this respect, the example of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation might be instructive.

47. The representative of China said that the work of the Committee would have a positive impact on international poverty alleviation efforts through the exchange of national experiences, the promotion of cooperation, and the formulation of poverty alleviation policies and measures at the national and international level. Development was the key point for the alleviation of poverty. In fighting poverty, the developing countries should rely not only on themselves, but also on a peaceful and stable international environment. It was necessary to alleviate their problems in the debt, trade, financial and other fields and to achieve closer international cooperation. Developed countries should take on greater international responsibilities, and the aid provided to developing countries should be increased.

48. The work programme of the Committee should not be general and all-embracing; it should be specific, well-focused and prioritized. The Committee should provide up-to-date information on the causes, characteristics, location and other aspects of poverty. It should also,

through the exchange of national experiences and country presentations, draw attention to successful experiences, draw lessons from failures and analyse their causes. At the international level, the Committee should urge the international community and developed countries to increase their aid, draw experience from successful cases, explore more effective methods and approaches, and also analyse the impact of the international economic and trade environment on the developing countries' efforts in respect of poverty alleviation. While some duplication was inevitable, all unnecessary duplication should be avoided.

49. Poverty eradication was a major task in China's development. In the past four decades, the Government had striven constantly to meet people's basic needs, and living standards had improved markedly. The agricultural reform in the countryside since the 1980s had in particular led to rapid economic growth and increases in rural incomes, thus mitigating poverty significantly. He hoped that the efforts of China would be understood and supported by the international community.

50. The representative of El Salvador said that poverty alleviation was one of the main objectives of her country's socio-economic policy. Her delegation therefore welcomed the establishment of the Standing Committee, particularly because she thought the interchange of experiences would be of great use.

51. After the destruction and other problems resulting from 12 years of conflict, the Salvadorian Government had sought a global solution involving the achievement of peace, economic stability and the redesigning of social programmes. The decentralization of social services had enabled the State to broaden its scope of action and to involve NGOs and the communities concerned in the development process. Community participation was in fact a key element in promoting sustainable development and gradually reducing poverty. Recent studies in El Salvador indicated that the efforts being made were proving successful.

52. Referring to the future work of the Committee, she offered to exchange her country's experience with respect to three programmes. One of her country's most important poverty alleviation programmes involved the Fund for Social Investment (FIS), which acted as an intermediary organ between national and international sources of financing and between NGOs and private organizations. Another programme (EDUCO) concerned primary education. It was based on community participation, administered by associations of heads of families and funded by the Ministry of Education. A third one dealt with programmes to facilitate savings and investment among recipients of family remittances.

53. Finally, her delegation was interested in hearing about others' national experiences with regard to support programmes for the promotion of small enterprises, in particular in the informal sector, methods of evaluation and follow-up of projects in the social sectors, and software systems designed for the use of census data in focusing and designing social programmes.

54. The representative of Japan said that, in its work, the Committee should avoid unnecessary duplication with the activities of other international organizations and agencies, and it should focus on those areas where effective and practical results could be envisaged. His delegation could, in general,

support the work programme outline suggested in the secretariat's issues note. It attached particular importance to the following areas: review of existing information and analyses on poverty; exchange and review of national experiences in dealing with poverty, in particular in such fields as human resources and community development, employment creation and increasing the productivity of the poor, and policies to promote the access of the poor to productive assets and social services; the impact of development assistance and cooperation programmes.

55. He emphasized that poverty had become an increasingly important issue on the international agenda, and the Committee had an important role to play in tackling the problem of poverty in the world, drawing lessons from national experience and making practicable recommendations.

56. The representative of Nigeria said that poverty alleviation was part of his country's overall national development strategy. Expanding population was one of the main obstacles to eradicating poverty, and the only solution was to implement a population policy through mass education. To this end, a Programme of Mass Literacy had been initiated in 1975, and a primary health-care scheme was planned.

57. In order to bring social services nearer to the people, the Government had embarked on decentralization of economic, social and political activities from the federal level to the state and local levels.

58. Programmes directed specifically at the poor related, inter alia, to measures designed to achieve integrated rural development, training programmes for self-employment in agriculture and small-scale industry, irrigation, land-use control to ensure small farmers were not dispossessed, and subsidized mass transport. Other measures included subsidization of agricultural inputs and a series of measures to improve the situation of rural women through education and access to subsidized credit.

59. As far as programme implementation was concerned, international NGOs had played an important role and should be encouraged to participate in the Committee's work. The main problem was one of resources, and a favourable external environment (through better terms of trade and access to markets) and adequate financial and technical assistance were vital.

60. The Committee should seek to identify the main causes of poverty and to devise appropriate dynamic policies. Issues for consideration should include the relationship between alleviation of poverty and sustainable development.

61. The representative of Tunisia said that since independence, his country had pursued a people-first strategy in all development efforts. Twenty per cent of GDP was spent on the social sectors with a view to encouraging self-sufficiency. Poverty was incompatible with human dignity, and his country had, accordingly, pursued policies to promote civil and political rights as part of an anti-poverty strategy. Since 1987, Tunisia had been modernizing and restructuring the economy, but special measures had been undertaken to ensure that social programmes were not adversely affected. In addition, efforts had been made to improve the economic performance of the

country and control inflation by reducing the external deficit, improving the balance of payments and maintaining healthy reserves. There had been a general liberalization of prices.

62. Tunisia was promoting specific programmes for vulnerable social groups, including the young, widows, children and the unemployed. Measures included in particular improved access to the education system and other special programmes specifically earmarked for impoverished families.

63. Despite all these efforts, serious obstacles to poverty alleviation remained. Further work was needed to assess the efficacy of poverty alleviation programmes, including the financing of such programmes, and to examine rural poverty and the issue of women and poverty.

64. Finally, the areas where the Standing Committee could make a contribution included: new systems of financing productive programmes for poor families able to work; poverty and environment; provision of rural incomes to reduce rural urban migration; provision of housing; provision of information to facilitate follow-up and evaluation of programmes at country level. Inputs should be provided by experts who had been successful in their own countries with similar programmes. International agencies could also provide assistance. He concluded by calling for an international strategy to fight poverty and strengthen vulnerable groups.

65. The representative of Australia said that an exchange of national experience should seek to open debate not only on successful models, but also on those which were acknowledged to have drawbacks. For its part, Australia had been following an approach of opening a policy dialogue with recipient countries, enabling it to include poverty alleviation factors in more broadly defined development assistance programmes. The aim of Australia's development cooperation programme was to promote the sustainable economic and social development of people in developing countries, and poverty alleviation was intrinsic to that aim. Australia's aid programme promoted poverty alleviation in three ways: first, by measures to promote economic growth through activities in areas such as infrastructure, mining, agriculture, macroeconomic policy, institutional str. ɟthening and higher education; secondly, by directly targeting the poor and focusing on activities in areas such as primary health care and community-based development; thirdly, through immediate humanitarian relief, including emergency assistance and support for refugees and displaced people.

66. Economic growth over the long term was a prerequisite for sustainable poverty reduction, but the poor were often bypassed by the wider development process and therefore needed assistance. On the other hand, the poor were also able to contribute to economic growth, and assistance which directly targeted the poor could be used to increase their productive potential and expand their earning power, for example through income and employment generation, micro-enterprise development and small-scale credit. Australia's approach to poverty alleviation was tailored for each individual country.

67. Concerning the work of the Committee, there was vast experience of poverty alleviation within the United Nations system. It was a major focus of the work of UNICEF, UNDP and WFP, and UNCTAD should channel its efforts towards poverty alleviation into this broader approach. UNCTAD had a special

role in exploring the connection between poverty and trade-related issues, and it should consult widely with other United Nations bodies and report on these consultations at future meetings of the Standing Committee.

68. The representative of Sri Lanka said that his country's Janasaviya programme was both a pro-poor macro policy and a core national programme for poverty alleviation. It had started in 1989, and it enjoyed a sustained commitment from the highest political authority. Its objective was to release the creative energy of the poor, who were placed at the centre of the development process. A support system, comprising the decentralized bureaucracy, extension services and banks, facilitated and supported their efforts. The Janasaviya Commissioner's Department and the Janasaviya Trust Fund were the key macro institutions which helped to organize the support system and to coordinate the process.

69. Janasaviya was very much a process. Its core values and principles were: trust the poor; the poor will decide and do, while others support them; the poor must be separately organized; a countrywide process of learning by doing and always doing what is just and right.

70. Once identified by their peers, each poor family enjoyed two interrelated forms of direct support - namely food and non-food goods and access to bank credits for up to a fixed 24-month period. The family had to work for its own improvement as a condition for obtaining the grant support. So far, 346,543 very poor families had been covered by the programme.

71. However, there was a clash of perceptions and methods between the old over-politicized bureaucratically dominated top-down paradigm and the new poor-centred, poor-first paradigm. In addition, the support system had found it difficult to reorient itself to the new pro-poor policies. Lastly, social mobilization was a major challenge; it had to be field-based, fully participatory and strategically focused on the central problems of the poor.

72. With regard to the work programme of the Standing Committee, Sri Lanka was ready to exchange experiences with interested persons and groups. It had already started a process of technical cooperation among developing countries.

73. The representative of Cuba said that, since 1959, Cuba had placed the highest priority on poverty alleviation. Its poverty alleviation strategies were still evolving, particularly in the fields of education, housing, medical services, etc.

74. In education, an effective campaign of adult education had been conducted by voluntary brigades. It had been found that the newly acquired literacy skills eroded after a while, but the problem could be overcome through provision of the complete primary school curriculum. Education in Cuba was free up to university level, and workers were given incentives to further their academic qualifications.

75. In the housing sector, in 1959 Cuba had inherited slums around the major cities. Construction of apartments had proceeded rapidly, but they had not proved to be the panacea for all housing problems. The recipients themselves

had then been organized, and, working with experts in the various aspects of construction, had built their own accommodation. The housing problems were not entirely solved, but the urban slums had been eliminated.

76. The fight against illiteracy had made it possible for a new generation of inventors to come forth, who had been responsible for the maintenance of factories and other facilities. There had been general progress in science and especially in biotechnology. Medical services included comprehensive coverage, with special advances in cancer treatment proving of particular benefit to women.

77. The representative of Mexico said that international organizations could play an important role in the fight against poverty. This was particularly so in terms of making available necessary information, as well as providing assistance and guidelines in those areas that required attention at the regional level. Economies of scale (in handling poverty alleviation issues) could be realized at the regional and national level. The end of the cold war had meant that the East/West divide had been replaced by the poor/rich divide. However, poverty was more serious than the ideological divide, because it affected the daily lives of people.

78. His country wanted to learn from the experiences of other countries in a number of areas, including job creation: Mexico had 1 million young people entering the labour market every year (in addition to those who were already there and might be unemployed). There were also problems associated with rural/urban migration, and his country would therefore like to exchange experiences on programmes to keep rural people gainfully employed, not just in agriculture but in other activities as well. He was thus interested in programmes of diversification in rural areas which could help eliminate the disparities between rural and urban life. Mexico was, of course, willing to share its own experience with interested countries.

79. The representative of Colombia said that what was most needed in the field of poverty alleviation was an exchange of experiences. In his country, poverty alleviation programmes had succeeded in reducing poverty significantly, and there had been a marked improvement in the distribution of incomes. Problems persisted, however, in both rural areas and large cities, and there was therefore a need for purposeful government action aimed at poverty alleviation. Effective programmes towards this objective would include education programmes, as well as universal basic health care. His Government was implementing programmes to assist small-scale enterprises financed by the Inter-American Development Bank, and efforts were being made to improve access to credit by small-scale enterprises and generally improve their competitiveness. Finally, his country was ready to share its experience with interested countries, and he called in particular for an exchange of experiences in identifying the poor and extending social security to them.

80. The representative of Argentina said that it was urgent to find solutions to the problem of poverty, which had actually worsened during the last decade. An exchange of national experiences on poverty alleviation was therefore fundamental.

81. Argentina had recently launched a new comprehensive social plan for the poor. Its objective was to achieve genuinely human development allowing for a better quality of life in the context of a participatory democracy. This could be done by optimizing public resource utilization with the aim of creating a modern, efficient and decentralized social policy. The first characteristic of the plan was decentralization of decision-making and implementation, which also implied the participation of non-governmental sectors and organizations who knew well the problems involved. The second aspect was monitoring and auditing, with the aim of efficient use of resources and administrative transparency. Thirdly, activities were to be coordinated by a recently established Federal Social Office. With regard to some of the specific measures envisaged under the plan, a specific package was designed for vulnerable groups. Measures included, inter alia, provision of food, housing and medical programmes for pensioners, preventive programmes for children at risk and the development of productive opportunities for disabled persons. A second type of measures were aimed at the creation of employment opportunities through the development of production centres, small family farms and small enterprises. Other measures included better access to education and development of human resources through increased granting of scholarships and improvement of educational facilities. Finally, nutrition and health programmes comprised, inter alia, the distribution of milk and medicine, childbirth care, construction of primary hospitals, vaccination and eradication of various diseases. At future sessions, her country would be ready to contribute to the deliberations of the Committee by sharing the experience acquired during the implementation of the new social policy.

82. The representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) noted that by providing an intergovernmental forum focused on poverty alleviation, the Standing Committee could provide a mechanism for Governments to share experiences on how best to attack poverty through concerted action at the national and international levels. While FAO recognized that the design and implementation of policies and programmes to deal with poverty was the responsibility of Governments, it would be glad to assist in these efforts. In his statement to the Economic and Social Council in 1992, the Director-General of FAO had made a number of points relating to poverty alleviation, including the need for research on crops which the poor could grow, increased financial resources needed for poverty alleviation, and the declining commodity prices in international markets.

83. The terms of reference of the Standing Committee were very broad, and could not be tackled adequately by any single United Nations body or specialized agency. The work of the Committee should therefore be coordinated with that of other committees and working groups with a view to complementing their work and avoiding duplication.

84. She drew attention to the work done on poverty alleviation by FAO, in particular activities carried out in the follow-up to the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) and the 1991 FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and Environment, the main recommendations of which were incorporated in UNCED's Agenda 21. Other major FAO activities on poverty alleviation related to nutrition and food security. In this context, she referred to the International Conference on Nutrition, which had been co-sponsored by FAO and WHO in December 1992. Since poverty was at the root of hunger and malnutrition, the World Declaration and Plan of

Action on Nutrition adopted by the Conference could be added to the list of major intergovernmental agreements linked to poverty alleviation given in document TD/B/CN.2/2, paragraph 40. FAO was ready to assist the Standing Committee within the limits of its mandate and resources.

85. The representative of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that although the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944 had identified poverty as a danger to prosperity, 50 years later the Cartagena Declaration had come to the same conclusion, and poverty was still on the increase in many parts of the world.

86. With regard to devising a strategy for the fight against poverty, ILO thinking on the subject had focused in the early years on the question of identifying the poor and determining who they were. In the 1970s, attention had refocused on the determinants of poverty and the measures to deal with them. In this connection, he mentioned structural factors such as wealth and asset distribution, household endowments and external shocks, including adjustment programmes.

87. In its future work, the starting-point for ILO would be to help countries in their national efforts to develop anti-poverty strategies. The ILO approach to poverty alleviation and reduction consisted of three key elements: first, a sustainable rate of employment-intensive growth, which for most developing countries meant a minimum of 6 per cent; second, a move towards a market-oriented approach to the labour market, with the upgrading of labour skills and increased access to assets by the poor; and third, the provision of safety nets, including social funds for the poorest segments of the population.

88. For such a strategy to be successful, Governments should treat poverty as an integral part of the national development strategy, promote a national dialogue, and broaden popular participation, as well as developing imaginative and low-cost schemes to reach the poor.

89. The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) said that health and socio-economic indicators had been deteriorating in many developing regions, particularly for underprivileged groups such as women, children, the unemployed, migrant populations and indigenous peoples. In that connection, the overall goals of WHO consisted of designing policies and strategies that were supportive of health services, and identifying vulnerable groups and providing them with equitable and cost-effective health care.

90. WHO had responded to the poverty crisis with a two-pronged approach which aimed at reducing inequities among countries and populations. At the country level, WHO initiatives included effective development of health services, while at the international level they involved fostering partnerships with other international organizations in order to improve the utilization of international aid flows. It was important that the health sector should be fully integrated into socio-economic development and the fight against poverty.

91. The representative of the World Bank said that the basic mission of IBRD was the reduction of poverty, which lay at the core of its assistance programme. The 1990 World Development Report, which reviewed progress with

poverty alleviation, had concluded that more than 1 billion people were still living in poverty. The World Bank had developed a two-pronged strategy for dealing with poverty issues, and it had carried out a number of activities to help translate the strategy into operational guidelines and actions and to support its implementation.

92. The progress achieved in implementing the strategy was reflected in Bank lending activities. She provided information on project and programme lending devoted to poverty alleviation and reduction in developing countries and economies in transition. She also informed the Committee of the analytical and research work carried out by the World Bank on poverty-related issues.

93. The World Bank would follow with great interest the deliberations of the Committee and the development of its work programme, and it would be happy to share the output of its current and future work on poverty with the Standing Committee. In view of the wide attention given to poverty issues in many international organizations, the World Bank suggested that the Standing Committee could, inter alia, explore in more depth three topics related to poverty alleviation, and for which UNCTAD was likely to have a strong comparative advantage. Those issues related to links with trade and poverty, the environmental implications of trade policies for the poorest countries, and comparative patterns of growth and poverty reduction.

94. The representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat said that the Commonwealth Consultation on Rural Poverty Alleviation, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1992, had been the culmination of an ongoing programme of work on poverty reduction by the Secretariat. The Consultation had been structured around six key issues, namely defining the problem and characterizing the poor, poverty-specific policy approaches, poverty programme design, development and delivery, resources and the sustainability of poverty alleviation programmes, integrating poverty alleviation into overall development strategies, and, lastly, the roles of those involved in poverty alleviation programmes. Broadly speaking, two main elements had emerged from the deliberations: firstly, an overall framework had been developed to explicitly involve poverty reduction objectives in the context of growth strategies. A focus on the rural sector was seen to be vital in poverty-reducing policies and programmes, since the overwhelming majority of the poor were in rural areas. Secondly, a series of detailed recommendations had been put forward to mitigate the present hardships faced by the poor. The most powerful and overriding message of the Consultation was that there must be a long-term commitment to coordinated efforts, by all those involved, to reduce poverty as a central objective of national policies and programmes, with resource allocations reflecting this focus. In addition, the need remained for interim measures to alleviate the immediate hardships faced by the poor. Specific needs included poverty mapping for effective targeting, helping the poor participate fully in the growth process, monitoring and evaluation of poverty programmes and the exchange of experience on successful initiatives. Finally, he emphasized that the Commonwealth Secretariat was ready to cooperate with UNCTAD and other agencies in their endeavour to combat poverty.

95. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that UNDP stood for human development and efforts were being intensified to support policy measures and operational activities designed to enlarge the

possibilities of the poor to satisfy their basic needs and develop their full potential. At the macroeconomic level, in addition to the publication of successive Human Development Reports, UNDP assisted Governments in systematically addressing poverty issues as part of their national, regional and local development strategies, while in terms of structures, UNDP was supporting developing countries in their efforts at decentralization. The strengthening of basic services had traditionally been the major area of UNDP's work in poverty alleviation, with a focus on primary and vocational education and curricula reform, preventive and primary health care, self-help housing schemes, low-cost water supply, sanitation and energy, and the provision of social security safety nets. Providing the poor with access to income/productive assets was a rapidly growing area of UNDP intervention, with many employment, micro-enterprise and credit programmes targeted at the poor. Another central feature of UNDP-supported poverty alleviation programmes concerned efforts to improve the situation of women. In general, accumulating evidence pointed to the fact that successful projects appeared to be those where community participatory methodologies were applied and where NGOs were involved as partners.

96. For the fifth cycle, the Governing Council had cited poverty eradication and grass-roots participation as the first of six priority areas targeted for national capacity building. US$ 20 million of special programme resources had been earmarked to support the development of concepts, methods, policies and strategies for poverty eradication and promotion of participatory development practices and their mainstreaming. This should facilitate UNDP's response to demands from Governments in terms of both technical expertise and information as well as mobilizing additional financing. He confirmed UNDP's commitment to participating in arrangements for exchanges and collaboration that would result from the Committee's deliberations.

97. The representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that refugees were the poorest among the poor. The majority of them, 80 per cent of whom were women and children, were from developing countries and were located in the poorest regions of some of the world's poorest countries. The reasons which pushed refugees to leave their countries were invariably linked with the violation of their basic human rights, yet it was no longer possible to deny the linkage between mass displacement and missed development. In such circumstances, durable solutions to mass displacements were, to a large extent, dependent on development initiatives. Relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development were thus inextricably related. Though UNHCR was not a development agency, it was aware of the necessity to create the link between refugee aid and development. UNHCR advocated greater inter-agency cooperation on refugee and returnee assistance. The recent initiatives to encourage greater and enhanced United Nations system-wide cooperation and coordination (e.g. General Assembly resolution 44/137 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/78) could further strengthen cooperation and coordination. The work on the Guidelines on Refugees and Development being promoted by UNHCR in the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operations) had been finalized at the Committee's first regular session in 1992.

98. The representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) said that worsening poverty was attributable to the current world economic crisis, the success in the 1980s and 1990s of the neo-liberal ideology, and the effect of the structural adjustment programmes recommended by IMF and the World Bank.

99. The key to the reduction of poverty was the provision of more employment. In this connection, he deplored the lack of interest of Governments in developed and developing countries in employment creation, and reproached Governments of developing countries for having supported the growth of poor-quality employment in the informal sector.

100. Poverty in many countries could also be traced to the low wages paid by domestic and foreign employers, and Governments which implemented a policy aimed at attracting foreign investors through a low-wage strategy were exposing vulnerable groups of their population to a downward spiral of wages.

101. Poverty must be tackled directly through the public sector which should identify and boost employment-intensive sectors and provide better education, training, housing and social benefits for the poorest. It should also endeavour to broaden the tax system to meet needs for investment and for a social safety net.

102. It was vital that the industrialized countries increase aid to the developing countries, reduce their debt and through GATT uphold their interests in the international trading system. Finally, there was an urgent need for a boost to the world economy to provide better jobs worldwide.

103. The representative of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) said that he was speaking in the name of NGOs, understood as non-profit organizations concerned with social change. Northern NGOs transferred the equivalent of $6 billion per year to the countries of the South, and the interest of NGOs did not reside solely in the alleviation of poverty but rather in its eradication. The Committee should embark on a series of in-depth analyses of the causes of poverty and investigate once and for all the reasons why more than a billion people were living below the poverty line today and why the development decades had led to an increase in poverty despite the measures taken to reduce it.

104. The issues which the Committee could study included: the disparities in the distribution of world income and the unequal access to technology; the relationship between population and access to resources, financial and other; the relationship between external debt, capital flight and other types of net resource transfers from South to North, and poverty; the impact of structural adjustment programmes on the situation of the poor, namely the consequential aggravation of their poverty; the role and effectiveness of international assistance; the correlation between poverty and democratization; and economic growth and sustainable development as basic conditions for resolving poverty problems. The Committee could also look into other issues such as the reasons why the one billion people below the poverty line lived in areas vulnerable to natural disasters, and the role of the State in the area of social security. Finally, it was important that the developed countries bring to the Committee their experience with regard to how to deal with poverty and the marginalization of the poor in their own societies.

105. The representative of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT said that although poverty was a phenomenon affecting both rural and urban areas, ITC's work on poverty alleviation was specifically within the context of rural development. One consideration was that the majority of the population in the developing world lived in rural areas, where poverty was not only widespread but was in fact growing worse. The ITC programme was based on the simple but empirical thesis that the basic cause of poverty was the lack of regular productive employment accompanied by remunerative income. Within ITC's mandate of "export and trade promotion", the programme sought to create rural employment and income opportunities through improvement of export supply capacity and market development. The characteristic feature of the concept was its focus on the human dimension. The programme emphasized the highest possible local value added in export supply development, and it sought to enlist the consensus of Governments, NGOs, the private sector, village elders and relevant organizations. The programme emphasized national institution-building and provided for the collaboration of other United Nations organizations. The regional bureaux in ITC had, on their own initiative, been implementing rural-based export development projects, and through these efforts ITC intended to address the problem of rural poverty within its mandate.

106. The representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that the central mandate of IMF was to help member countries maintain or restore policies conducive to growth, balance-of-payments and price stability, and more open economies. The Fund had been paying increased attention to poverty and to social issues, particularly during periods of economic adjustment and stabilization, and had sought to work with member countries to establish an appropriate mix of financing and adjustment policies consistent with the overall macro framework. It catalyzed requisite financial support during the adjustment period. Reflecting growing awareness, the Fund was increasingly focusing on structural issues as well, with due attention to the most vulnerable sectors of society. In the Fund, as elsewhere, there was a conviction that internal and external imbalances tended to hurt the poor more. Accordingly, the macroeconomic framework was crucial for high-quality growth. To provide financial support for these efforts in the low-income countries, the Fund had created specific facilities, and in so doing, the Board had given guidance to the staff on social issues in general. Building on this, social concerns had become increasingly prominent in the Fund's work. It had steadily strengthened its capacity to support member countries that were pursuing policies to help the poor. Dealing with these issues had been an evolving process, and an important element of the strategy in recent years had been to provide technical assistance in this area to member countries.

107. The representative of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Development said that, within the context of the restructuring of the economic sphere of the United Nations system, the Secretary-General had decided to establish three separate departments. The first department, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, had a policy development function, focusing on the integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of broad policy coordination issues in such areas as growth adjustment, poverty, hunger and malnutrition. The second department, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, would focus on the compilation and dissemination of economic and social statistics and analyses of long-term trends. The third department, the Department for

Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS), would serve as a focal point for the provision of management services for technical cooperation and act as an executing agency in selected cross-sectoral areas, with emphasis on the twin concepts of institutional development and human resources development and on enhancing the contribution of different social groups to development. Technical cooperation with developing countries in the above areas would particularly focus on the requirements of the least developed countries, as well as those of economies in transition. DDSMS would be glad to assist in the execution of all projects falling within its fields of competence with the aim of alleviating and eradicating poverty by providing the developing countries with experts, equipment and proper training.

108. The representative of Kenya said that the document prepared by the secretariat reflected the new spirit of Cartagena. In its work, the Standing Committee should be selective and engage in action-oriented dialogue allowing it to prioritize the issues and work out a reasonable work programme. Issues to be covered by the work programme should be clustered into two sections, with the first devoted to identification of issues and problems on a prioritized basis, also highlighting the needs of the poor. Short definitions of "poverty" and "the poor" would be important for deciding on the scope of the work. Poverty should be discussed in terms of selected communities, geographic location, women, youth and children, the handicapped, the retarded and the aged. He also listed 12 issues that his delegation viewed as requiring the attention of the Committee. The second section of the work programme would relate to the operational aspects. A system of regular consultations should be constituted to address problems of poverty at various levels, and to make the consultations meaningful it would be important to emphasize the involvement in the decision-making process of the targeted lowest strata of the population. The role of women, especially poor rural women, should also be stressed. He highlighted the importance of coordination, consultation and collaboration among different actors of the policy dialogue, which should produce recommendations to the Committee for discussion and decision. Mechanisms should also be created to identify new ways and means of poverty alleviation. He also pointed out the seriousness of the reverse transfer of resources from developing to developed countries and called for measures to arrest this trend. This question deserved thorough study and discussion by the Committee and other relevant bodies of UNCTAD. He also stressed the need to constitute review and appraisal mechanisms on the implementation of the Committee's work programme.

109. The representative of Bolivia said that, to cushion the poor from the worst effects of the 1985 comprehensive economic reforms, the Government of Bolivia had created the Emergency Social Fund (ESF) to provide temporary employment to those displaced by the economic crisis and to bolster basic social services. One of the lessons learned from the ESF experience was that, while a demand-driven emergency programme could help to lessen hardships from unemployment during adjustment, alleviation of structural poverty required greater direction and care in targeting investments and services.

110. The Social Investment Fund (SIF), established in 1990, was based on these guiding principles. It had assigned priority to basic health care and primary education, with particular attention to the needs of the rural areas, low-income urban districts, women, and other vulnerable groups. The operational objective of the SIF was to improve the coverage and quality of

services through provision of financing for investment in infrastructure, primary health care, water supply and basic sanitation, nutrition, basic education and training. The SIF had developed mechanisms to improve the targeting of social programmes and strengthen links with local governments, NGOs and community groups.

111. Another important lesson learned from the SIF concerned the value of cooperative relationships with NGOs and other private groups working at the local level.

112. The SIF projects were funded by domestic, international and regional banks, as well as bilateral donors. The Fund had been very effective in using its resources thanks to improved transparency, modern techniques of disbursement and prevention of corruption and waste.

113. The representative of Chile said that although Chile had been successful in reforming its economy, the level of poverty remained a serious challenge for his Government. The latter had therefore adopted a strategy aimed at integrating marginal groups into mainstream development. The Social Solidarity Fund, while providing short-term relief and assistance to the poorest groups of the population, generated productive active employment and self-help. It also provided basic social services such as education, nutrition, health and housing for the poor.

114. With regard to the work programme, the Standing Committee must concentrate on practical actions based on broad international cooperation and drawing on different national experiences. The Committee should carry out in-depth studies on the impact of external factors on poverty and make concrete recommendations to the Trade and Development Board and the Conference, and it should establish a programme of technical assistance activities for alleviating poverty with the participation of all countries.

115. To that end, the Committee should agree on a three-pronged work programme. The first part should state clearly the aims of the exchange of national experiences and the different activities to be carried out under this heading. The second part of the programme should focus on the external factors affecting poverty, for example development assistance, international trade, sustainable environment and migration. The third part of the work programme should comprise a set of technical assistance activities which could be funded from multilateral institutions and bilateral contributions, with the objective of facilitating the exchange of national experiences.

116. The representative of Peru said that the policy measures adopted by his Government to deal with poverty issues were designed to complement other measures aimed at economic reform and the revitalization of the economy. The poverty approach focused on the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The selection of programme and types of assistance was based on a "poverty map", while the identification of the priority groups was based on key health and education indicators. The objective of his Government's plan was to reduce poverty by at least 15 per cent over the next few years.

117. In the Government's efforts to alleviate poverty, human capital development had been placed at the centre of the social development strategy. Priority had been given to basic health, water, sanitation and education, with particular attention being paid to marginal and vulnerable groups.

118. The National Social Compensation and Development Fund had been established to finance and carry out social investment projects throughout the country. Its basic aims were to mobilize the work potential of the poor and to enhance their productive capacity, as well as to create temporary jobs. In sectoral terms, preference had been given to supporting basic education, improving the working opportunities of the very poor, particularly in rural areas, and improving sanitation and health standards.

119. With respect to the work of the Standing Committee, the issues of interest to his Government included: different national experiences in dealing with the impact of structural adjustment on the poor; measures aimed at broadening popular participation and decentralization in decision-making; and effective policies for the distribution of food to the poor, particularly policies making it possible to bypass intermediaries and reduce costs.

120. The representative of the Philippines said that poverty remained pervasive in his country. In spite of a slight improvement since 1988, about 4.8 million households still fell below the poverty line.

121. His Government had put in place poverty alleviation policy measures consistent with the needs and resources of the vulnerable sectors of society. People empowerment and human development were at the centre of the strategy. The major aim was to improve access to basic social services and development opportunities by focusing social services on the poor, developing social safety nets, redirecting public resources towards basic social services, disadvantaged regions and specific groups, and expanding schemes to promote the physical and social well-being of the homeless, guided by specific provisions of the national development plan. Measures were being implemented to ensure delivery of basic social services to the poorest communities, ensure that the poor benefited from agrarian reform and had access to training and extension services, and help poor communities to organize cooperatively.

122. A Joint Consultative Group on Policy, bringing together UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP and steered by the Philippine Council for Poverty Alleviation, was implementing a joint programme on poverty alleviation in collaboration with the relevant government departments. The joint programme concentrated on technical assistance, capacity-building and an integrated approach to service delivery in selected areas.

123. There were also special programmes for areas which were generally not accessible for security and other reasons. Other programmes included self-employment assistance, day-care services and supplemental feeding; primary health care; and credit lending facilities from government-owned and controlled corporations.

124. Finally, he endorsed the call for the inclusion of the issue of poverty and natural disasters in the work programme of the Standing Committee.

125. The spokesman for non-governmental organizations (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) said that NGOs had acquired considerable experience in working with the poor at the local, national and international levels. That experience could be useful to the Standing Committee, and the NGOs stood ready to participate extensively in the Standing Committee's work.

126. In that connection, a distinction should be made between poverty reduction and poverty eradication. The resources existed to end poverty, but access to those resources was hindered by structural and political obstacles, and it was those obstacles that must be overcome.

127. With regard to methods, it was important to analyse the causes of poverty, evaluate the effectiveness of anti-poverty policies, and formulate alternative policies. Research and exchanges of experience relating to regions, eco-cultural areas or problem areas should also be encouraged, with the involvement of the poor through their associations and NGOs. Existing development policies should be reexamined, and sustainable development should be seen as a global challenge requiring a new vision. Finally, the NGOs would be setting up a grouping of NGOs to combat poverty and support the work of the Committee.

Action by the Standing Committee

128. At the 6th (closing) plenary meeting, on 22 January 1993, the Chairman presented a draft work programme (TD/B/CN.2/L.2), with an oral amendment.

129. At the same meeting, the Standing Committee adopted the draft work programme, as orally amended (for the work programme as adopted, see annex I).

Statements made after the adoption of the work programme

130. The representative of UNDP said that UNDP fully identified itself with the goals of the Standing Committee and looked forward to exploring jointly areas for collaboration in respect of initiatives proposed by the Committee and the extensive ongoing poverty alleviation programmes supported by UNDP at the country, intercountry and interregional levels. UNDP was prepared to review with UNCTAD areas for cosponsorship of agreed poverty-related activities which met the criteria for the use of special programme resources earmarked for poverty eradication in the 5th cycle.

131. The representative of Tunisia referred to his country's policy of combating poverty through democracy-based development programmes and suggested that the first of the workshops to be organized within the framework of the Standing Committee's work programme be held in Tunisia.

132. The representative of Sri Lanka said he was confident that the Standing Committee, through its work, would help to reduce poverty at the global level. However, as it was generally recognized that past development policies had proved inadequate, new alternatives must be sought. Accordingly, at its next session the Standing Committee should explore the possibility of establishing a small group of eminent persons, consisting of individuals whose achievements in this area had been globally acknowledged, to provide, through their vision and wisdom, the most appropriate strategic directions for the fulfilment of the Committee's work.

133. The spokesman for the Asian Group (Nepal) said that, over the last three or four decades, much work had been done on poverty alleviation, but no real progress had been made. The idea of setting up a group of eminent persons to formulate new concepts was therefore a good one.

134. The representative of Brazil said that the outcome of the Committee's deliberations was positive and would give the Committee an opportunity to carry out innovative work in the future. The reference in the work programme to paragraphs 49-60 of the Cartagena Commitment should be understood to mean that the results of exchanges of experience would be widely disseminated by the secretariat and would serve as a basis for discussions in the Committee.

135. The representative of ILO said that, in selecting items for its future work that were central to ILO's core mandate of social justice, the Committee had recognized that ILO's work was on the right track. The fight against poverty was one of the principal themes in ILO's proposed work programme for 1994-1995, and job creation for the poor, the impact of structural adjustment programmes on poverty, social funds and social safety nets, organization of the rural poor and promotion of small and micro-enterprises were all areas where ILO had considerable experience. ILO would be happy to share the results of its work with the Committee.

136. In that connection, ILO's members would no doubt call upon the ILO secretariat to respect its core mandate in delivering a quality programme for the poor and urge ILO to collaborate with other United Nations agencies, acting within their own mandates and according to their respective comparative advantages, to ensure that the common effort against poverty was as effective as possible.

137. The spokesman for the Group of 77 (Zimbabwe) said his Group noted with appreciation that the Committee's work programme underpinned the need for policy reform, human resource development, technical assistance and institution-building. It also noted with appreciation that the concerns of most LDCs had been taken into account

138. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that the UNCTAD secretariat welcomed the varied and balanced programme of work adopted by the Standing Committee. The atmosphere that had prevailed during the Committee's deliberation and the broad participation augured well for the efficacy of future work. The secretariat would pursue the suggestions made subsequent to the adoption of the work programme, and it would disseminate the results of exchanges of experience.

139. The Chairman said that the Standing Committee was exploring uncharted ground and must therefore be prepared to take risks in its work. The Committee's activities must not be confined to mere discussions; the goal must be to achieve real reductions in the number of poor people. The Committee's work must therefore be action-oriented, which meant measuring the concrete effects of its efforts in terms of improvements in living standards. The first step had been taken, but the road ahead was very long, and it was essential to continue working closely together.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Opening of the session

140. The first session of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation was opened on 18 January 1993 by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

141. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that, at its first executive session, the Trade and Development Board had decided that the rules of procedure of the Main Committees of the Board should be applied to the new Standing Committees, in as flexible a manner as possible, for the election of the Officers of the Bureaux of the Standing Committees. Consultations on the election of officers of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation had been held with regional coordinators.

142. At its 1st plenary meeting, on 18 January 1993, the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation elected its officers as follows:

Chairman:	Mr. Ernesto Tironi	(Chile)
Vice-Chairmen:	Mr. Susil Sirivardana	(Sri Lanka)
	Ms. Leonora Saurel	(El Salvador)
	Mr. Moncef Baati	(Tunisia)
	Mr. Manuel de Lemos	(Portugal)
	Mr. Oleg K. Voronov	(Russian Federation)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Robert Konrath	(United States of America)

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

143. At its 1st plenary meeting, on 18 January 1993, the Standing Committee adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/CN.2/1), as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Establishment of the work programme of the Standing Committee
4. Provisional agenda for the second session of the Standing Committee
5. Other business
6. Adoption of the report of the Standing Committee to the Trade and Development Board.

D. Provisional agenda for the second session of the Standing Committee

(Agenda item 4)

144. At its 6th (closing) plenary meeting, on 22 January 1993, the Standing Committee approved the draft provisional agenda for its second session (TD/B/CN.2/L.3) (for the provisional agenda, see annex II).

145. With regard to the timing of the second session, it was agreed to recommend that the second session of the Standing Committee should take place in early 1994, with the question of the exact date to be referred to the Group on Calendar Matters.

146. The Standing Committee also agreed to recommend a meeting of an intergovernmental group of experts to discuss the following substantive item: "Exchange of experiences on poverty reduction impacts of social funds and safety nets, including mobilization of domestic and external resources for poverty alleviation". The question of the exact timing of the meeting of the intergovernmental group of experts would be referred to the Group on Calendar Matters.

E. Adoption of the report of the Standing Committee to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 6)

147. At its 6th (closing) plenary meeting, on 22 January 1993, the Standing Committee adopted its draft report (TD/B/CN.2/L.1 and add. 1 and 2) and authorized the Rapporteur to complete the report in the light of the proceedings of the closing plenary.

Annex I

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION 1/

Pursuant to "A New Partnership for Development: The Cartagena Commitment", adopted at the eighth session of the Conference, the Standing Committee, on the basis of Board decision 398 (XXXVIII), which sets out in annex B the terms of reference of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation, agreed on the following work programme:

A. Basic guidelines

1. The primary objective of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation is to contribute to national and international efforts to prevent, alleviate and reduce poverty, particularly where it is more acute, and to the formulation of related national and international policies, bearing in mind the diversity of country situations, including the particular problems of the least developed countries and the most vulnerable population groups.

2. To that end, the Committee will primarily serve as an international forum for exchanging and examining experiences in poverty alleviation, identification of projects and mobilization of resources, both at the national and international levels. It will be action-oriented, that is, it will focus on strategies and policies leading to concrete programmes, with durable results, which are considered to be replicable and multipliable with success. It will be needs-based, that is, it will cater to the evolving diversity of needs of countries by endeavouring to cover the major areas indicated below, and by selecting at each of its sessions a choice of several topics which will be addressed in parallel. Eventually, the Committee's main findings should be followed up in the sequential process presented in paragraphs 49 to 60 of the Cartagena Commitment for implementation.

3. The intergovernmental dialogue would be greatly assisted by the presence of representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations engaged in poverty alleviation programmes and experts.

B. Methods of work

4. In addition to setting up the agenda for its next session, at each session the Committee will choose a topic for the exchange of experiences in anti-poverty policies and programmes, to be carried out by a preparatory intergovernmental group of experts which will report to the Standing Committee at its next session. This intergovernmental group of experts should include government policy-makers, experts from international organizations concerned, and NGOs, as well as community representatives dealing with the formulation and appraisal of anti-poverty programmes/projects.

1/ As adopted by the Standing Committee on 22 January 1993.

5. The Standing Committee encourages its members and appropriate organizations to facilitate the convening of workshops in developing countries to exchange experiences on anti-poverty policies and programmes, especially on topics relevant to those being discussed by the Standing Committee at its following session. The Standing Committee would welcome receiving the results of these workshops. This exchange should seek to open debate not only on successful policies and programmes but also on those which are acknowledged to have drawbacks and deficiencies.

6. The UNCTAD secretariat is invited to send a questionnaire to the members of the Standing Committee seeking information on: (i) policies and programmes on poverty alleviation which each country is interested in learning about; (ii) policies and programmes which each country is willing to present in detailed terms. The UNCTAD secretariat will present the results of this survey before the second session of the Standing Committee.

C. Areas of the work programme

7. The Standing Committee will carry out work in the following areas:

(1) Review of existing information and analyses on causes of poverty

Analysis of causes and reasons for persistence of poverty.

(2) Programmes and policies

(a) Productive sector programmes:

(i) Access to productive and labour-intensive employment opportunities;

(ii) Access to productive assets (land, capital, technology and infrastructure);

(iii) Programmes supporting productive activities (technical training, pricing policies, the regulatory framework for expanding trade and production activities);

(b) Social programmes:

(i) Access to social services (policy elaboration, service delivery, combination of delivery channels, financing of social services);

(ii) Safety nets (transfer schemes, special problems of countries in transition in this respect, targeting of specific programmes) and social security schemes;

(c) Macroeconomic policies and poverty alleviation:

(i) The effects of macroeconomic and meso-economic policies (including choice of policy mix for stabilization and budgetary choices) on poverty prevention and reduction;

(ii) The immediate effects on the poor of structural adjustment and interventions aimed at reducing the social costs of adjustment programmes on the poor;

(iii) Global development strategies and paradigms appropriate for poverty prevention, alleviation and reduction;

(iv) Examination of the impact of debt on the dynamics of poverty.

(d) Institutional organization for poverty reduction programmes:

(i) Good management and capacity building (legislative and regulatory framework; planning systems; decentralization);

(ii) People's participation and involvement of the poor in the development process, including women's participation.

(3) Development assistance and poverty

(a) Analysis of experiences on the role, effectiveness and overall impact of international action to combat poverty;

(b) Review of the adequacy (quantitative as well as qualitative) of external financial resources to complement national efforts and identification of major impediments (on both the donors' and recipients' sides) affecting implementation of assistance programmes for poverty alleviation;

(c) Exploration of ways and means of promoting international assistance to the developing countries in their poverty alleviation programmes and projects;

(d) Identification of ways and means for optimizing the respective roles of Governments, donors, international organizations, and NGOs in specific categories of programmes and projects.

(4) International trade and poverty alleviation

(a) Analysis of the effects on incomes, particularly those of the poor, of increased competitiveness of the developing countries and of elimination of trade barriers;

(b) Analysis of the effects on incomes of the poor of diversification of exports of goods and services and of stabilization of export earnings;

(c) Analysis of the effects of external shocks, inter alia arbitrary protectionist measures, trade sanctions, sudden falls in commodity prices, etc, on the poor, and proposed national and international measures to mitigate their impact;

(d) Analysis of national and international policies and instruments to stimulate exports of labour-intensive goods and services from developing countries as well as the participation of small-scale enterprises in international trade.

(5) Alleviation of poverty and sustainable development

(a) Analysis of the linkages between poverty and sustainable development;

(b) Examination of the implications for the poor of national and international policies relating to environment (e.g., application of the polluter-pays principle; environmental standards that might adversely affect the poor).

(6) Population, migration and poverty alleviation

(a) Analysis of the linkages between migration (internal and international) and poverty;

(b) Examination of the relationship between population growth control programmes and poverty.

D. Technical cooperation

8. The Standing Committee will identify, for consideration, areas in which technical cooperation should be strengthened.

9. The secretariat will provide to countries, at their request, technical assistance within the available resources. In this context, the special situation of the least developed countries will be taken into account.

Annex II

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Exchange of experiences on poverty reduction impacts of social funds and safety nets, including mobilization of domestic and external resources for poverty alleviation 1/

4. Effects on poverty alleviation of structural adjustment programmes, job creation policies and means for the participation of small scale and micro-enterprises in international trade

5. Social mobilization and organization of the poor

6. Provisional agenda for the third session of the Standing Committee

7. Other business

8. Adoption of the report of the Standing Committee to the Trade and Development Board.

1/ The Standing Committee will have a report of the intergovernmental group of experts on this item.

Annex III

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE 2/

1. The following States members of UNCTAD, members of the Standing Committee, were represented at the session:

Afghanistan
Algeria
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bangladesh
Belgium
Bolivia
Brazil
Cameroon
Chile
China
Colombia
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Germany
Ghana
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Kenya
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Madagascar
Malaysia
Mexico
Morocco
Myanmar
Nepal
Netherlands
Nigeria
Norway
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Slovak Republic
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Viet Nam
Zambia
Zimbabwe

2/ For the list of participants, see TD/B/CN.2/INF.1.

2. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Standing Committee, were represented as observers at the session:

Bahrain
Bhutan
Bulgaria
Burundi
Dominica
Equatorial Guinea
Holy See
Malta
Qatar
Syrian Arab Republic
United Republic of Tanzania
Venezuela
Yemen

3. Participating pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3237(XXIX) was:

Palestine

4. The following were represented at the session:

Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations;
Economic Commission for Africa;
World Food Council;
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements;
United Nations Development Programme;
World Food Programme;
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
United Nations Population Fund.

The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT was also represented at the session.

5. The following specialized and related agencies were represented at the session:

International Labour Organisation
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Health Organization
World Bank
International Monetary Fund
United Nations Industrial Development Organization

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was also represented.

6. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

Commonwealth Secretariat
European Economic Community
International Organization for Migration
League of Arab States
Organization of African Unity

7. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General Category

International Association of Agricultural Economists
International Chamber of Commerce
International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
International Council of Voluntary Agencies
International Peace Research Association
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises
World Confederation of Labour
World Federation of United Nations Associations

8. The following non-governmental organizations, especially invited by the UNCTAD secretariat, were represented at the session:

European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People
Innovations et Réseaux pour le développement
Environnement et développement du Tiers-Monde

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